

Whelping or Birth of Puppies

FAQ's

How long is a dog pregnancy?

Pregnancy or gestation will range from 57-65 days with an average of 63 days.

Do dogs have a pregnancy test?

There is not a reliable laboratory test. Abdominal ultrasound can be done as early as three weeks after mating to detect pregnancy. However with ultrasound, the number of puppies is difficult to determine. Abdominal palpation can be done by a veterinarian at 4 weeks of pregnancy. Abdominal x-ray at 6 weeks of pregnancy can detect puppies. This type of x-ray is not harmful to the puppies and can give an accurate method for counting the number of puppies. This is important to know when the mother is finished delivering all the pups.

What medications are safe for a pregnant dog?

Several antibiotics such as Amoxicillin, Clavamox, Cephalexin, and Baytril are safe. Heartworm and some flea preventatives are safe as well. Pyrantel Pamoate dewormer is safe. A pregnant dog can be vaccinated only in the last week of pregnancy for distemper and parvovirus. This will help pass immunity to the pups if the bitch was not vaccinated prior to breeding.

Can you tell when the dog will start having puppies?

A blood test for progesterone is accurate. If the progesterone level is >5 ng/ml, delivery is at least 24 hours away. If the level < 2.5 ng/ml, then the bitch is ready for delivery or a C-section. The mother's body temperature will drop to 98-99 degrees F during the initial stage of labor.

How long will it take a dog to deliver puppies?

There are three stages of labor:

Stage One- The uterus will contract, but these contractions are not noticeable, the cervix will dilate, and the rectal temperature will decrease. The dog will be restless, panting, shivering, not eating or drinking, and start nesting. The first stage can last as long as 24 hours.

Stage Two- This is the stage of active labor and delivery of the puppies. You will notice active straining. This stage will last for one to two hours.

Stage Three – This stage begins when the placenta or after birth is passed. The time for the third stage can last from 15 minutes to 2 hours. This stage will alternate with stage two.

When would the birth process be cause for concern or high risk?

A pregnancy lasting 68 days or longer is considered high risk. A vaginal discharge that is a color other than clear PRIOR to whelping is cause for concern. Stage two labor lasting

longer than 2 hours without a pup delivered and stage three labor lasting more than three hours are also reasons to consult professional advice.

When and how much oxytocin can we give to the bitch?

Oxytocin can be given sub Q (under the skin) or in the muscle (IM). The dose should be 1/10 of a cc per 10 pounds of the dog's weight before she was pregnant. The largest dose is 1.0 cc, even for giant breed dogs. NEVER give more than two doses of oxytocin 20 -30 minutes apart.

Is an elective C-section an option?

The number one cause of puppy loss is prolonged labor. A properly timed C-section can result in more live pups. Timing is very important for the mother to accept and raise the pups after a C-section. The bitch's blood progesterone level must be below 2.5 ng/ml for optimal success of a C-section.

How are puppies normally born?

Puppies are usually born headfirst with the front legs extended. 40% of puppies are born backwards with the hind legs and tail emerging first. A breech presentation is not normal (this is when the rear legs are extended under the belly of the pup and only the tail can be grasped). The breech puppies will require assistance and possibly C-section.

How fast should puppies gain weight?

Pups should gain 5-10% of their weight each day. Their weight will double in 10 days. They should gain one ounce per day for each 30 pound of adult body weight.

What are some signs that puppies are not healthy?

Puppies are >80% water, so they can easily dehydrate if the temperature is too warm. To test if a pup is dehydrated touch the gums; if they are sticky and not moist, the pup is dehydrated. Dark urine is also a sign of dehydration. The puppy's body temperature will increase with age (week one 96-97 degrees F, week two 97-98 degrees F, week three 98-99 degrees F). A pup has hypothermia when its temp is below 94 degrees F.

What causes puppies to have diarrhea?

Having the pups too warm or over feeding are the most common causes of diarrhea. A blood-tinged color to the diarrhea indicates infection.

When should a puppy be hospitalized?

Pups are hospitalized for hypoxia (low oxygen or blue gums) or hypothermia (body temp below 94 degrees F). Dehydration is a critical situation. Fluids must be given by a route other than orally if the temp is below 96 degrees F. A puppy can not live more than 24 hours with low blood sugar (hypoglycemia). Caution must be adhered to when supplementing sugar as too much sugar will cause brain swelling.